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ABSTRACT

This booklet will help parents identify what they want in a family child care program. It suggests topics to consider and describes general characteristics of high quality programs and providers. Sections focus on defining family child care, choosing a program, allowing time to find a good program, being considerate of providers, paying for child care, looking for family child care, making a decision, getting off to a good start, and making child care work. Common concerns about child care are also discussed. The section on looking for family day care offers guidelines on ways to identify possibilities, the first phone call, the visit, and the follow-up conversation. The visit is detailed in terms of: (1) caregiver characteristics, including personal relations with children, discipline, language, expertise, attitude toward parents, and the caregiver's children; (2) age-related activities of the program; (3) characteristics of the home, including space and materials; and (4) health and safety, including routines for dealing with emergencies. Also included in the booklet are a checklist, citations for additional reading, and a list of resources. (RH)

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CHOOSING FAMILY CHILD CARE

A Handbook For Parents

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Choosing Family Child Care: A Handbook for Parents

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This guide was produced by the National Family Day Care Project, a three-year initiative of the National Council of Jewish Women to pioneer effective roles for volunteers in supporting family child care at the grassroots level. In 30 communities across the country, NCJW volunteers are working with local child care experts to increase the supply of high quality family child care and promote its importance.

The National Council of Jewish Women, a membership organization of 100,000 nationwide, has a century-long history of community service and advocacy to improve the well-being of children and families of all ethnic, economic, and religious backgrounds. NCJW volunteers have traditionally been strong and effective child care supporters at the local, state, and national levels.

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Introduction

What is Family Child Care?

Family child care is the care of a small group of children in the *provider's* home. It is the most common form of child care in this country, especially for younger children. Parents choose family child care for its intimate home setting, flexible hours (some providers will adapt to unusual work schedules), consistent caregiver, and small group size.

Family child care homes exist in most neighborhoods, although each one is unique. Some have children of varying ages, like a large family. Some have only toddlers, or only school-age children. Some are informal and spontaneous with few planned activities; others follow a daily schedule, like a mini-preschool. Some are full day, some are part day, some offer weekend and evening care.

Most family child care providers are women; many have children of their own. This handbook uses the terms "caregiver" and "provider" to refer to the operators of family child care homes, and for convenience it refers to them as female — although there are many competent men doing this work. We have chosen to use the term "family child care" rather than the more common "family day care," consistent with the change occurring in the field. As one provider said "We care for children, not days."

State regulations specify minimum health and safety standards, and limit the number and ages of children that can be cared for by one provider. Most commonly, states limit homes to six children. Some also allow about twelve children with two caregivers, if there is enough space. To find out about what you as a consumer can expect based on *your* state's family child care regulations, call your state's child care licensing office, or a child care resource and referral agency. But you should understand that regulation defines only minimum standards. It is important to judge the quality of each program for yourself.

Choosing a Program

This booklet will help you identify what you want in a family child care program. It suggests topics to consider and describes general characteristics of high quality programs and providers. But *you* are the expert who must decide what you value and what your child needs.

Does your child do better in quiet, low-key situations or active, stimulating ones? Would you prefer a program that is informal and unstructured, one that

emphasizes planned activities, or something in between? No program is right for everyone — you will have to weigh the pros and cons of each for your child and your family.

In two-parent families, child care works best when parents decide together what they want. Once they agree, then one or both parents can do the looking. It is helpful if both parents meet the provider before the final decision is made.

Child care resource and referral agencies, or "R&Rs," are available in many communities to assist parents in finding child care. They may be especially helpful to you in your search. (Call the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, 507-287-2220, or the National Association for Family Day Care, 800-359-3817, for the child care resource and referral agency nearest you.)

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Common Concerns About Child Care

The Effects of Child Care on Children

Parents often wonder if child care will harm their children. The answer is, "It depends." If children have to spend long hours in a highly stressful situation — if the provider is harsh, caring for too many children, or otherwise neglectful — chances are children will suffer. It is also harmful for young children to go through many changes in caregivers. But most children do well in child care settings where they feel safe and comfortable.

When You Have a New Baby

If possible, it is best for parents to have the time to get to know their babies before returning to work. For this reason, many experts urge employers to offer 4-6 months of parental leave when a baby is born or adopted. Getting to know your baby includes understanding his or her physical needs and rhythms, emotional needs, and different-sounding cries. Some babies are easier to get to know than others.

Fear of Strangers

If your infant or toddler is fearful of strangers when you are ready to begin using child care, see if you can arrange to visit the home together for a few days before you begin working — so your child will feel secure as she or he gets to know and trust the caregiver, the routines, and the new surroundings. If possible, you might also want to work part-time for a while. Many short days in care are easier on young children than a few long days.

Jealousy

It is natural for you to feel some jealousy toward the caregiver as she becomes important to your child. But don't be afraid that she will replace you. Research shows that caregivers do not take the place of parents. Instead, they become additional influences in the child's life. Even though it may feel threatening to you, your child will develop best if she or he can form a close, trusting relationship with the caregiver.

Allowing Time to Find a Good Program

Choosing a family child care home usually takes a lot of time and effort. Talking to many providers and visiting several programs will help you feel confident when you make this big decision. If at all possible, begin several weeks ahead of time. It may take you that long to find a home you are satisfied with, and good caregivers often have waiting lists, especially for babies. Knowing that your child is being well cared for will be worth the effort you put into finding the right program.

Being Considerate of Providers

Family child care providers are busy people who have to be "on their toes" most of the time. Just because they are at home does not mean that it is always convenient for them to talk to you. Be considerate, and flexible in making arrangements that meet the caregiver's needs as well as your own.

Most people get nervous when they feel they are being evaluated. Do not take a checklist along on your visits. Instead, observe what you can and jot down brief reminders if necessary. Then write down your impressions right after each visit, so that you'll remember the details later when you are ready to make a decision.

Paying for Child Care

How much will child care cost? Infant care often costs more than care for older children, and fees are usually higher in cities where the cost-of-living is high. Typically parents spend 10-20% of their gross income on each child's care. While this is a major expense for parents, in fact caregivers' net earnings are often lower than minimum wage. The reason for this seeming contradiction is that child care is "labor intensive." Just a few parents pay all the costs of the program — the income of the provider, any fringe benefits, and expenses such as materials, equipment, food, and insurance.

If you can manage to pay more than the going rate in your community, you are likely to get better care, and a caregiver with fewer children who feels that she has a real job — one that is financially rewarding as well as personally satisfying.

Try to find the best program you can and then figure out how to pay for it. It is worth making sacrifices in other areas of your life for a few years so that you can invest in the best child care you can find. Ask whether your employer offers any form of child care assistance. (Employers who hear this concern often enough are more likely to respond to their employees' needs.)

If your family income is below average, call your child care resource and referral agency or state licensing office to find out if you qualify for any financial support. Ask caregivers if they offer any child care scholarships.

All parents can claim the Dependent Care Tax Credit on their federal income tax form. (Depending on your income and child care expenses, you can deduct up to $2,400 for one child or $4,800 for two or more children — use IRS Form W-10.) Some states offer a state dependent care tax credit as well. You will need proof of payment and your provider's social security number to get these tax credits.

How to Look for Family Child Care

After you have decided what kind of care you want, you will be ready to look for the best program for your child. Four steps are recommended here: 1) Identifying Possibilities, 2) The First Phone Call, to screen providers; 3) The Visit, to observe the program; and 4) The Follow-Up Conversation, to ask any remaining questions. After you consider the information presented here, you may want to use the checklist at the end of this booklet to keep track of information, or you may want to make your own checklist of the factors that are most important to you.

Identifying Possibilities

To begin, try to identify several possible family child care homes. If your community has a child care resource and referral agency, you should be able to get names and perhaps additional help from them. Other possible sources of names are newspaper ads, other parents, other family child care providers, providers' associations, your local elementary school, church, health clinic or pediatrician's office, local colleges with early childhood programs, and community bulletin boards. Be creative in identifying people who know or work with many parents of young children, and who may be able to help you in your search.

You will probably want to begin with caregivers who are close to your home or place of work, and then, if you need to, consider homes that are farther away.

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The First Phone Call

Once you have indentified possible providers, you can call them to find out if they have an opening that meets your basic needs. Begin by asking if it is a good time to talk, and if not, when you should call back. Then ask about:

- ❑ an opening for your child's age
- ❑ hours, and ability to meet possible changes in your schedule
- ❑ other children in the program, their ages and schedules
- ❑ description of a typical day
- ❑ location
- ❑ fees*
- ❑ length of time the provider expects to continue offering care (it is not good for young children to switch child care arrangements too often)
- ❑ whether there are any pets, or whether anyone in the household smokes
- ❑ whether parents can drop in any time, once the child is enrolled

Add to the list other questions that are particularly important to you. If you like what you hear on the phone, arrange for a visit. Do not rely on others' opinions of a program without checking it out for yourself.

The Visit

If at all possible, arrange to visit the home while the children are there, so you can see what they do and how the caregiver responds to them. If the caregiver is willing, you may want to bring your own child, so you can see how they all get along together. Simply explain that you are visiting — do not ask your child to make the final decision.

Some providers have standard procedures for parent visits. Ask each one what she suggests. Explain that you don't want to get in the way, that you just want to watch a regular day, and that you will talk to her later when she has time. Allow at least 1 1/2 hours for each visit, although you might decide to leave sooner or stay longer, depending on what you see.

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* See Paying for Child Care, page 5. Some providers prefer not to discuss fees in the first phone call.

Following are some suggestions for what you may be able to observe:

The Big Picture

Trust your feelings about the caregiver and the home environment. You will quickly be able to see whether the children are busy and happy, bored and listless, or tense. Listen to the sounds. How would your child feel about being there? Does the group seem like a family? Does the provider focus on the children rather than housework or telephone calls?

The Caregiver

Personality. Do you want to leave your child with this person? Is she warm? Relaxed? Energetic? Does she seem to feel good about herself and enjoy her work? Does she show good common sense?

Relations with Children. Is she affectionate? Does she respond to and respect each child as an individual? Or does she have so many children that she can do little more than tend to their basic physical needs? Do children like her, and come to her for help and comfort? Does she help them feel good about themselves and what they can do?

Discipline. Does the caregiver use positive guidance, instead of punishment, that allows children to keep their dignity? Are there a few clearly stated rules that are followed consistently? Does she understand that babies don't understand discipline, and that toddlers need to be cheerfully re-directed? Does she help older children talk through their feelings to work out good solutions to their problems? Is there a minimum of fighting? If you do not get to see enough during your visit to answer these questions, you can ask "what if" questions during your follow-up conversation. For example, "What if two children are fighting over a toy — how do you handle that?"

Language. Does the caregiver talk respectfully to all the children, never harshly — and listen carefully when they talk to her? Does she speak your language well enough to communicate with your child and you?

Expertise. Some providers are like parents, others are more like teachers. Either approach is valid; both can foster learning. Does the caregiver seem to know what to do with children of different ages? Does she seem to understand that young children learn best through play and exploration, not flash cards and worksheets? Does she have lots of ideas for playful activities? Does she know how to help children feel good about themselves and each other? Do you agree on how to help a child who is learning to use the toilet?

Attitude Toward Parents. Do you sense that you could talk to the caregiver easily, and work out the problems that inevitably come up? Rather than competing, do you think you and the caregiver would be able to act as partners? Does she take the time, when she can, to talk to parents about the small but important details of each child's day? Listen to how she talks about other children and their parents.

The Caregiver's Children. Parents are sometimes reluctant to choose a provider who has young children of her own, but these mothers are often excellent providers. They have an extra interest in providing a good program. If the caregiver has children of her own, do they accept the other children? Do they all get along well together?

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The Program

Activities. What do the children do all day? Are these important hours well spent in play that involves exploring, making choices, experimenting, creating? Are children learning everyday living skills such as dressing themselves and preparing food? Is there a smooth and easy pace, with enough time for each child not to feel rushed? If children watch TV, which programs do they watch?

Are both girls and boys encouraged to participate in all the activities? Are there plenty of chances for physical activity, including outside play every day except in bad weather? Does the caregiver take the children on walks or field trips? If so, would your child enjoy them?

Activities for Different Ages. Children of all ages should be able to choose activities that match their individual abilities and interests.* Babies should get more than feeding and diapering — do the caregiver and other children play with them, talk to them, respond to them? Or are babies left alone for long periods of time, with only their most basic physical needs met? Do toddlers have enough interesting toys so they are not expected to share them very often? Does the provider read to toddlers as well as to older children? Do preschoolers have enough challenging things to do and to make? Do school-age children have opportunities for recreation, arts and crafts, relaxation? Can they play with their friends?

The Home

The Space. Are there safe, inviting, comfortable places for children to play? Is each room used by children "child-proofed" enough so the caregiver does not have to say "no" very often? Is there a good place for babies to crawl and explore, and for toddlers to move around? Do school-age children have places to play, to do homework or projects? Are there pleasant places for eating, napping, reading books, being alone? Is children's work displayed?

Materials. The best materials for young children's play are the basics: simple art materials like playdough, dolls, pots and pans, blocks, cars and trucks, puzzles, water play equipment, and climbers or other equipment for very active play. These materials should be arranged so children can see them and choose to use them without help, at least some of the time.

* Parents, too, are often confused about how children learn best. See "Developmentally Appropriate Activities," page 13.

Health and Safety

Basic Safety. Check for: safety plugs in empty electrical outlets; poisonous cleaning products locked away or stored on high shelves; safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs; a fence around the play yard; a cover on the sandbox when not in use (to avoid cat feces). Are very young children's toys free of pieces that could be swallowed? Are equipment and toys washed frequently, and in good repair — including outdoor equipment?

Are children ever left to play unsupervised? If school-age children are sometimes left unsupervised, do they have clear rules and follow those rules?

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Health. Is the food nutritious?* Do children of every age have opportunities for rest when they need it? Do they get fresh air and exercise? Are play areas clean enough for children to crawl around on the floor? Is there a diapering area that is easy to clean after each use, and a child-proof place to put soiled diapers? Does the caregiver wash her hands every time she changes a diaper, blows a nose, begins to prepare food? Does each child have personal bedding that is washed regularly?

Emergencies. Does the provider appear to be ready for emergencies? Are emergency and parent phone numbers posted by the phone? Are there smoke detectors on every floor? Is there a fire extinguisher in the kitchen?

As soon as possible after your visit, jot down specific facts and your feelings about what you saw, and make a list of remaining questions.

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* You may want to ask whether the provider participates in the Child Care Food Program. In addition to reimbursing most food costs, this federally sponsored program requires nutritious meals and snacks, as well as home visits and periodic training.

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Developmentally Appropriate Activities for Young Children

How can you tell if a program is "educational?" Young children do not learn in the same way as older children. Research in child development shows that children under age 8 do not learn well from instruction that is out of context. Instead, they learn through active play and work with the people and things in the world around them. They need meaningful activities that match their interests and learning styles. Following is a brief description of appropriate activities for family child care, adapted from the National Association for the Education of Young Children's *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8*.

The provider's basic job is to set up an interesting, stimulating environment. Then she allows time for children to choose their own activities and play at their own pace. Through such play each child builds and practices new skills, and develops self-esteem, a sense of competence, and positive feelings about learning.

The provider watches for opportunities to support and extend the play that evolves. She intiates activities such as reading books and singing songs in response to the children's moods and interests. Different interests and ability levels of the children are expected, accepted, and used to plan future activities.

Each age has particular needs:

Infants and toddlers learn by experiencing the environment through their senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling), by moving around, and through social interaction. The provider responds quickly and sensitively to babies' changing signals.

Toddlers and 2-year-olds need opportunities to explore, make choices, and carry out their own ideas. The provider allows them to move at their own pace away from, and back to, the security of a loving caretaker. She guides them in expressing their often intense and hostile feelings in acceptable ways.

Preschoolers are motivated by their natural curiosity to make sense of the world; they do not need to be pushed to learn. However, a sensitive adult who observes their play can pose additional challenges, to extend their thinking beyond what they discover for themselves. Learning about reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and other areas is integrated into interesting activities such as cooking, woodworking, and nature study. To be understood fully and remembered, new information must be meaningful in the context of the child's experience.

School-age children need a range of activities that offer a change of pace from the school day, including sports, cooking, and projects of various types.

The Follow-Up Conversation

If you like what you have seen on your visit, you will want to arrange a follow-up conversation to talk about anything you were not able to observe, and to discuss business policies. Ask questions about whatever is on your mind. Following are some topics you might want to discuss.

Training and Experience	Does the provider go to workshops or read about young children? Has she had coursework in early education and child development? Does she have family child care accreditation or certification? Does she belong to an early childhood professional association, family child care network or support group?
Stability and Back-Up Arrangements	Does the provider take care of her own needs and her family's, to prevent "burn-out?" For instance, does she take pre-arranged vacations? Ask about arrangement the caregiver has made for back-up substitute care. How many days was she closed unexpectedly in the last year? Can parents bring mildly ill children? What happens when a child gets sick during the day? What if the provider or one of her own children becomes sick? Is a child who comes down with a contagious disease isolated from the other children? If you cannot take time off from work with short notice, you will want to have your own back-up plan for when your child gets too sick to go to child care, or when the provider is unavailable. If both parents are involved, you may be able to take turns with emergency arrangements.
Values	Ask the provider which holidays she celebrates with the children. You may also want to ask if she accepts and feels comfortable caring for children with different ethnic and religious backgrounds. If you have any concerns, ask her about them directly.
Health	Has the provider had a physical exam recently, showing that she is generally healthy and physically able to be responsible for a group of children?
Emergencies	You might want to ask "What if" questions about emergencies. For example, "What if you had to rush one child to the hospital?," or "How would you get all the children out if there were a fire that blocked the front door?"

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Has she taken courses in infant/child first-aid and CPR? If not, would she be willing to?

Does she have a reliable substitute caregiver? Can the substitute come at any time? Will the children ever be left with other family members? Who else might care for the children in an emergency?

When you find a caregiver you like, ask her to give you names and phone numbers of parents you can call as references. Ask them about their children's experiences. If they had it to do over, would they choose that caregiver again?

At the end of the follow-up conversation, explain to the provider that you want to think over your decision, and tell her specifically when you will let her know. When you find a caregiver you really like, tell her so, and ask her if she will hold the space for a few days until you can make your decision. You may want to leave a deposit to hold the space. It important that you call each provider back, even if you don't choose that program.

Making a Decision

How do you weigh all the information and come to a decision? There is no one right way. Again, trust your feelings. Try to sort out what you feel strongly about, and what more minor concerns you can live with. In which home do you feel most comfortable? Where would your child be happiest? Which caregiver has the best relationships with the children and parents in her program?

What if you must begin work and you have not found a satisfactory caregiver? Rather than settling for a program that doesn't seem right, consider making a plan for temporary care while you continue looking.

What if you check out all your possibilities and still do not find satisfactory child care — then what do you do? You might be able to get together with other families and hire someone to care for the children in one of your homes. Check if this is permitted in your state, and look into the liability issues. Or perhaps *you* might decide to begin a family child care program in your home — that's how many providers get started!

Business Practices

Family child care is a small business. It works best when both the provider and the parents spell out their expectations in a signed contract. If the provider does not have a contract, you can create one together. It should specify fees; your child's schedule; meal and snack arrangements; and policies about payment, late pick-up, holidays and vacations, illnesses (children's and provider's), discipline, trips, and substitute caregivers. It might also list the names and phone numbers of anyone else who will be permitted to pick up your child, and people to be called in an emergency if you can't be reached.

Many providers charge for time when a child is sick or on vaction (because they are holding the child's space). It is also reasonable for them to charge enough to cover job benefits received by most workers in this country: holidays, vacation time, sick days, medical insurance, and retirement savings. You should expect fees to be raised periodically.

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A Gentle Separation

Time spent helping your child through a gentle separation will prevent problems later, and get all of you off to a good start. This is a new idea for many parents, employers, and providers alike. (We are just beginning to understand the long-term importance of helping young children avoid traumatic separation from their parents.) Unfortunately, a gentle separation requires several days in some cases, but employers often want parents to start work immediately. Try to negotiate with your employer for the time you need — it will make you more productive when you do begin work if you know your child is happily settled.

It is worth making every effort to spend time with your child at the child care home until she or he feels safe and trusts the caregiver, the routines, and the new surroundings. Individual children vary in how long this takes. If your child is generally outgoing and has had positive experiences with separation already, a brief visit might be enough. But if this is the first time the two of you have been separated, you might best go there together for a couple hours every day for several days — especially if your infant or toddler is afraid of strangers. If the caregiver is willing, you may want to stay for a full day, so that you can be familiar with what your child will be doing throughout the day.

Because many parents and providers are unaware of the need for this kind of separation, it is useful for you to explain your reasons and assist the provider feel comfortable with your spending so much time there. During your visits, you and your child can play with the toys and the other children, and you can help the provider. As appropriate, you can help your child use the toilet, eat meals, and lie down for a nap. Talk together about the new people and new things to do.

On the other hand, your child may be more ready for the separation than you are. It is natural for you to have mixed feelings. It is understandably hard to leave your child in someone else's care, especially if you do not know the person well. You may have heard that young children should be with their parents, not in child care. Try to sort through your own feelings. As *you* get to know and trust the provider, you will become more confident and comfortable.

Saying Good-Bye

When you sense your child is ready, you can begin leaving for increasingly longer periods. Although it may be hard to say goodbye, it will be alright. Try to work through any anxiety, guilt, or sadness you feel — children pick up their parents' feelings through actions and facial expressions, as well as words. Your child will come to trust in your return if you always say good-bye and tell where you are going and when you will return.

A helpful way to handle the daily separation is to develop a ritual. Spend a few minutes settling your child in and exchanging information with the provider. Then be on your way, confidently and cheerfully. It is natural for young children in new child care situations to cry for a couple minutes when their parents leave. They may be comforted by a special "blankie" or stuffed animal, a photo of the family, a parent's scarf or key chain.

If you are beginning a new job at the same time your child is beginning a new child care program, this will probably be a stressful period. Build in all the supports for yourself and your family that you can.

Making It Work

As you settle in to your new family child care program, there are a few things you can do to help it be successful for all of you.

Taking Care of Problems When They Arise

Make an effort to raise concerns with the provider as soon as they come up, so that they do not grow. Approach these conversations in a non-critical, cooperative manner, and expect that the caregiver will be interested in solving problems with you. Most problems are easily solved if they are talked about soon after they arise, with both of you acting in good faith.

Although concerns will come up, try not to dwell on them. Be sure to notice the good parts of your child's experience as well.

Your Relationship with Your Caregiver

Ideally, parents and providers are partners, working together for the best interests of the children. Take the time to talk regularly to your caregiver; you can speak by telephone if it is not convenient when you bring or pick up your child. Keep her well informed — tell her when your child did not sleep well, or when something exciting or upsetting is happening at home. And pay attention to what she says to you.

Taking care of little children is often viewed as unimportant work in this society. Providers may feel that their efforts go unrecognized, and often they are right. Get to know your caregiver as a person. Talk to her about how *her* day has been. Be considerate of her, and her family. It is especially important that you try not

When It Is Time to Change Your Child Care Arrangement

Common Situations. As time passes, your child's needs may no longer match the situation — you'll want to check every few months to make sure that the caregiver and the program continue to be well suited to your child. Perhaps you will move or change your work schedule. If you decide it is time to make a change, you must begin the process of ending your current situation and looking for another. Again it will help to plan ahead. If your child is age two or older, explain in simple terms why you want to make the change — to make it clear that it is not the child's fault. Plan a goodbye ceremony with the provider, the children, and perhaps the other families.

When There Is a Serious Problem. Occasionally, in spite of your efforts, you may get involved in a child care setting that is not satisfactory. Perhaps your child shows signs of stress, even after a gentle separation and a month or so of adjustment. Watch to see if your child looks sad and withdrawn, or shows major changes in sleeping, eating, or toilet use — or protests strongly about going to child care. If you see any of these signs of distress, make an appointment to sit down with the caregiver to talk about the problem. Depending on the situation, you might also want to talk to other parents about their children's reactions.

Only a very small percentage of child abuse occurs in child care settings. However, you should consult an expert immediately if you see warning signals of child abuse — unexplained bruises which would be unlikely to come from a fall, or unusual interest in or knowledge of adult sexual behavior (beyond the normal curiosity of young children). If you suspect any form of abuse, be sure to report it to Child Protective Services.

Sometimes it's hard for a parent to know how serious a problem is. If you are not sure what to do, talk with someone who knows a lot about young children. A child care resource and referral agency may be able to assist you. It will help to remember that children are resilient; they usually recover quickly from bad situations that do not last too long.

to be late when picking up you child. Thank her when you appreciate something; tell her when your child particularly enjoyed something. Don't call her a babysitter — that term insults the important work she does. Refer to her as a provider or a caregiver.

After looking carefully for child care and getting your child off to a good start, chances are you will be happy with your choice. As noted in the beginning of the booklet, you will now be able to enjoy some well earned peace of mind and pride in knowing that you have met one of the great challenges of modern parenthood. ***Congratulations and good luck!***

CHECKLIST

Note: Make copies of this checklist so you have one for each provider.

Basic Information

- ❑ Name _____
- ❑ Phone Number _____
- ❑ Address _____
- ❑ Hours/Schedule _____
- ❑ Number and Ages of Children _____
- ❑ Fees _____

Overall Impression _____

_____

_____

Concerns _____

_____

_____

The Caregiver

- ❑ Personality _____
- ❑ Relationships with Children _____
- ❑ Attitude Toward Parents _____
- ❑ Expertise _____
- ❑ Reliability _____

The Program

- ❑ Activities _____
- ❑ Materials and Equipment _____
- ❑ Space _____
- ❑ Health and Safety _____
- ❑ Emergency Plans _____
- ❑ Back-Up Arrangements _____

Notes _____

_____

_____

Additonal Reading

Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8 (Expanded Edition), edited by Sue Bredekamp; published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (see below). $5.00.

A widely used source of information about what to do and what not to do in designing developmentally appropriate programs for young children.

Opening Your Door to Children: How to Start a Family Day Care Program, by Kathy Modigliani, Marianne Reiff, and Sylvia Jones; published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (see below). $3.50.

Nearly everything one needs to know to begin a family child care program.

Working and Caring, by Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, Addison-Wesley; $16.95.

Explores the psychological issues of parents who choose child care for their infants and toddlers. Discusses the developing parent-infant relationship and suggestions for choosing and adjusting to child care.

Resources

Families and Work Institute
330 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10001; 212-465-2044.

National Association for the Education of Young Children
1834 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Washington, DC 20009; 800-424-2460.

National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
2116 Campus Drive Southeast, Rochester, MN 55904; 507-287-2220.

National Association for Family Day Care
815 Fifteenth Street N.W. #928, Washington, DC 20005; 800-359-3817.

National Black Child Development Institute
1463 Rhode Island Avenue N.W., Washington, DC 20005; 202-387-1281.

National Center for Clinical Infant Programs
733 15th Street NW, #912, Washington, DC 20005; 202-347-0308.

National Council of Jewish Women Center for the Child
53 West 23rd Street, New York, New York 10010; 212-645-4048.

ncjw

NCJW CENTER FOR THE Child

For additional copies of this handbook, contact The National Council of Jewish Women, 53 W. 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010; 212-645-4048.